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COMMENTARY

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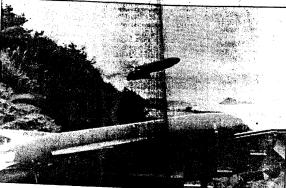
Gulf War Entering Critical, Perhaps Final, Phase for All

CPYRGHT

The firing of a few hundred machine-gun rounds from an American warship in the Persian Gulfon Nov. 2 may have served to drive away an intruding boat, but it also divers attention from some of the more significant weapons and forces of the Iran-Iraq war—a conflict in which the United States, whether or not Washington wishes to acknowledge it, is now deeply involved. This involvement arises from two circumstances. First, America is giving armed assistance to the oil exports of Kuwait, a state that from the start of the Gulf war has been one of Iraq's leading supporters. Second, while this assistance continues, Iraq'is free to continue its fairly successful air-sea offensive against Iran's oil industry, which supports Tehran's war effort.

We have notyet, of course, experienced major Iranian retaliation, which, if it compared its likely be delivered by Chinese Silk-your of the State of the St

If also is confident that it has the tools to divert the missile once detected.
Will the Silkworm be used? A normal government faced with the naval and air strength of the United States would continue to employ the Silkworm only against Kuwait targets, Issue defense from that country's American Hawk missiles and old Soviet SAM-7 surface-to-air missiles. But, as we know now, the government in Tehran is not a normal rational one. Rather it is one Soviet SAM-/ Surface-to-air missiles. But, as we know now, the government in Tehran is soldiers and officials in 94 forave into west soldiers and west soldiers an



A Silkworm missile is launched during a military exercise in China. The weapon's 1,000-pound-plus warhead can severely damage a large vessel.

worms that remain from the original pur-900135. V

The adverse course of events in the Persian Gulf is not the only troublesome situation facing Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's regime. Late last month the government secu-rity council met to discuss for the first time the expanding operations of what it terms "terrorists" on it western frontier.

The attackers are the Mujahedeen
Khalq, or People's Warriors, who have
claimed from their headquarters in Baghdad to have killed or wounded 4300 Iranian

spoonful of salt. But reports from Western intelligence agencies in Tehran confirm that, although the figures of Iranian casualties may be exaggerated, the fact remains that the Majahedeen are presenting an increasingly serious military problem for the Iranian amp Iranian army.

The elements of the problem are famil-iar. The best of Iran's regular troops are else-where—threatening Basra, training for a new offensive in the north. Raids by the Muja-hedeen must be met by poorly armed local

The Mujahedeen's objectives in the at-

acks include the destruction of arms and supplies. Their leader, Massoud Rajavi who helped overthrow the shah, knows the Iranian forces are running short of

the Iranian forces are running short of modern weapons and in a recent statement claimed that his forces had destroyed equigment worth millions of dollars. Fragmentary intelligence reports from Iran and its neighbors indicate that the internal situation is vulnerable to this sort of resistance activity. Although the Khomeini regime's police have ruthlessly quelled any open signs of disturbance, these reports speak of widespread disaffection among two main groups.

speak of widespread disaffection among two main groups. The first is the urban middle class. Developed under the shah, it has lost jobs and standing, Its members no longer enjoy their old standard of living — not with lamb at \$35 a half pound. Within this class, the liberated women of the shah's era are the most outspoken critics of the present regime. The second group is made up of the mothers and fathers of the "martyrs," the mame commonly given to the young men who have been killed in the war with Iraq. While there has never been an official figure, some estimates run as high as \$600,000 dead.

The official government position is that the parents are proud of their sons' martyrdom. But the government has done nothing financially for the parents, whose loss of son to till farms or run shops would be the equivalent in our society to a loss of Social Security or an old-age nepsion.

ecurity or an old-age pension.

Exploitation of that situation by the Muin The beta of Iran's regular troops are elsewhere—threatening Basra, training for a new offensive in the north. Raids by the Mujahedeen or even a decisive Iraqi victory, if and when Tehran launches its much dishedeen must be met by poorly armed local forces. The raiders, usually striking at night, laye has designed to the government. So, of course, could Annual forces are the properties of the son and the government. So, of course, could Annual forces are the properties of the son and the son